

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1015

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JO, IS

SUBJ: EMIGRATION OF WEST BANK ARABS

REF: AMMAN 4828

SUMMARY: WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT ISRAEL SUBSIDIZES OR DIRECTLY INDUCES EMIGRATION FROM WEST BANK. ALL INDICATIONS ARE, IN FACT, THAT THERE IS LITTLE EMIGRATION AND THAT PRESSURE TO RETURN TO WEST BANK IS GREATER THAN PRESSURE TO LEAVE. WE UNDERSTAND ALSO THAT ISRAELI WORK PERMIT SYSTEM OPERATES GENERALLY WITHOUT PROBLEMS. CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP HERE IS NONETHELESS CONCERNED OVER LONG-RUN STABILITY OF CHRISTIAN ARAB COMMUNITY, AND IS TAKING STEPS TO MAKE LIFE MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR YOUNGER CHRISTIAN ARABS. END SUMMARY.

1. WE ASSUME ISRAELIS WOULD WELCOME EMIGRATION OF ARABS FROM WEST BANK, PARTICULARLY MORE HOSTILE INTELLECTUAL AND PROFESSIONAL CLASSES. IT MAY EVEN ENTER INTO CALCULATIONS OF SOME ISRAELIS THAT CONTINUED OCCUPATION, ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS, LAND SEIZURES AND PURCHASES, ETC., WILL ENCOURAGE EMIGRATION. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, OF ISRAELI EFFORTS DIRECTLY TO IN-

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DUCE WEST BANK ARABS TO LEAVE, OTHER THAN INCREASINGLY RARE

CASES OF EXPULSION.

2. WHAT DOES SEEM CLEAR IS THAT THERE IS LITTLE EMIGRATION AT PRESENT TIME. TO DOUBLE CHECK OUR GENERAL IMPRESSION TO THIS EFFECT, WE DISCUSSED QUESTION WITH RED CROSS CHIEF HERE AND WITH GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH. RED CROSS OFFICIAL, NO FRIEND OF ISRAEL, SAID THAT NUMBER OF ARABS TRYING TO RETURN TO WEST BANK CLEARLY GREATER THAN NUMBER LEAVING. WHATEVER LIMITED OUTFLOW THERE WAS REPRESENTED, IN HIS VIEW, CONTINUATION OF PATTERN WHICH HAS LONG EXISTED IN THIS AREA, PARTICULARLY EMIGRATION TO US AND LATIN AMERICA. GREEK PATRIARCH SAID HIS CHURCH WAS BUSY WITH APPLICATIONS FROM ORTHODOX ARABS FOR RETURN TO WEST BANK. THERE WAS NO SIGNIFICANT OUTFLOW OF ARABS. (WE UNDERSTAND ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF GREEK NATIONALS DOES CONTINUE TO DECREASE BY PERHAPS 2 PERCENT A YEAR.) PEOPLE TELL US THAT PRESSURE TO RETURN RESULTS BOTH FROM IMPROVING ECONOMIC SITUATION HERE AND FROM FACT PALESTINIANS BEING SQUEEZED OUT OF GULF AREAS AS LOCAL POPULATION ACQUIRES ABILITY TO HANDLE JOBS PALESTINIANS HAVE BEEN DOING.

3. WE ALSO ASKED RED CROSS CHIEF ABOUT WORK PERMITS. HE SAID ISRAEL ISSUED TEMPORARY PERMITS FOR ONE YEAR WHICH COULD BE RENEWED BY WEST BANK FAMILY WITHOUT APPLICANT HIMSELF RETURNING. SYSTEM SEEMS TO WORK WITHOUT DIFFICULTY AND THERE IS EVEN "LOST PERMIT PROCEDURE" OPERATED THROUGH RED CROSS OFFICE IN AMMAN WHICH WORKS WELL. HE HAD NOT HEARD OF PROBLEMS IN RETURNING. (WE KNOW FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT CERTAIN NUMBER OF ARABS, MAINLY CHRISTIANS, WHO HAVE GONE TO LIVE IN OTHER COUNTRIES, FIND IT THEN IMPOSSIBLE TO RETURN FOR RESIDENCE HERE. THIS IS DIFFERENT TYPE OF SITUATION, HOWEVER.)

4. US IMMIGRANT VISAS ARE UP SOMEWHAT THIS YEAR AFTER CONTINUING DECLINE FROM 1969 HIGH. IN CALENDAR 1972 WE ISSUED 1,114 IMMIGRANT VISAS, ABOUT 90 PERCENT TO ARABS. THIS YEAR FIGURE SHOULD BE ABOUT 1,300. WE SUSPECT THIS REFLECTS NORMAL UPWARD TREND IN VISA STATISTICS AFTER TAILING OFF OF POST-1967 EMIGRATION PRESSURES.

5. COMMENT: DESPITE APPARENT RELATIVE STABILITY AT MOMENT, CHURCHES AND OTHER CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE NOT COMPLACENT ABOUT FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. BOTH ORTHODOX AND CATHOLICS ARE MAKING EFFORTS TO REDUCE MATERIAL PROBLEMS WHICH THEY FEEL TEND

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TO LEAD TO EMIGRATION. CATHOLICS ARE OPENING FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE IN BETHLEHEM AND ARE WORKING ON SCHEME TO PROVIDE FINANCING FOR HOUSING. GREEK PATRIARCH TELLS US OF SIMILAR THOUGH MORE MODEST EFFORTS HE IS MAKING. THEIR ASSUMPTION, AND THAT OF OTHERS SUCH AS BETHLEHEM MAYOR, SEEMS TO BE THAT MAJORITY OF YOUNG CHRISTIAN ARABS WILL STAY, DESPITE ISRAELI OCCUPATION, IF LIFE HERE OFFERS THEM ADEQUATE MATERIAL PROSPECTS AND AMENITIES. MAJOR QUESTION-MARK FOR BOTH MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS IS ATTITUDE OF YOUNGER

INTELLECTUALS AND PROFESSIONALS. WE HEAR MANY ARE INCREASINGLY
CONSIDERING GETTING OUT, AND THERE IS PROBABLY SOME TRUTH TO
THIS. IMPORTANT EXCEPTION WOULD BE THOSE WHO FEEL OBLIGATED
TO STAY FOR NATIONALISTIC REASONS, THESE PROBABLY CONSTITUTE
SMALL MINORITY.

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